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Public Information: Virginija Morgan

Email: VMorgan@usaid.gov

<http://centralasia.usaid.gov>

PRESS RELEASE

THE U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (USAID) MARKS WORLD AIDS DAY

December 1, Dushanbe: Two projects funded by The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Central Asian Program for AIDS Control Interventions Targeting Youth (CAPACITY) Project and the Drug Demand Reduction Project (DDRP), conducted a number of events to mark World AIDS Day in Dushanbe city. Events included: educational activities about HIV and drug use prevention at the Youth Power Center; a demonstration of educational films; a drawing contest on the topic "My Attitude to People Living with HIV/AIDS"; television debates about stigma and discrimination around HIV/AIDS; and screening of a short video-clip containing information about the World AIDS Day and addresses of places where young people can get counseling and testing on HIV. The CAPACITY project also provided financial support and assistance for conducting an HIV education event at the State Pedagogical University. In collaboration with the Dushanbe City AIDS Center, Narcology Center and other city officials, DDRP held a concert, which included a living, 25-meter "red ribbon" made up of young volunteers.

The slogan of this year's World AIDS Day is "Stop AIDS! Keep the Promise!" and the theme for the next two years is leadership. This year's World AIDS Campaign highlights both political leadership demonstrated in responding to AIDS, and leadership that has been witnessed at all levels of society. This day aims to enhance political leadership needed to fulfill commitments on promises – particularly the promise of universal access to treatment, prevention, care and support, and to generate a greater public awareness.

Approximately 7,000 young people aged 16 to 24 participated in USG-funded events dedicated to the World AIDS Day that started November in Dushanbe, Khujand and Khorog.

HIV/AIDS prevention is a priority for the US Government and for USAID. Recognizing that HIV/AIDS is a global health emergency requiring emergency action, the American Government decided this year to double its assistance to most affected countries, to total \$30 billion.

In 2007, USG-funded events reached more than 42,000 vulnerable youth through training, outreach and counseling on HIV and drug use prevention. In the prison system, 145 prisoners received education and information on the risks of heroin use, and 28 penal system staff were trained on drug demand reduction and health promotion. The USG supported training for 23 trainers in a promising intervention known as Break the Cycle, which has been linked to a decrease in the initiation of drug use. The USG also funded life skills training, rehabilitation and counseling for 1,350 drug users, including 63 drug-using sex workers.

U.S. Government also provides assistance to the Government of Tajikistan in the area of stewardship of HIV control activities, prevention of HIV and drug use among most-at-risk groups, improvement of quality of HIV related services, and sentinel surveillance. USAID's CAPACITY and DDRP projects are two of the many assistance projects made possible by the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Since 1993, the American people through USAID have provided more than 270 million dollars in support of economic growth, democratic institutions, health care, and education systems in Tajikistan. USAID is the biggest donor organization from a single country working in Tajikistan.

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